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Governor Barbour Calls for Physical Activity In Schools
More School Nurses Also On Agenda

CHOCTAW, Mississippi – Governor Haley Barbour told Mississippi educators today he will support legislation that requires periods of daily physical activity for students in kindergarten through eighth grade classes.

“It is imperative for our students to understand that learning takes many forms and along with the academic we must also teach the benefits of physical well-being,” Governor Barbour told school health, wellness and safety officials gathered at a conference sponsored by the state Department of Education’s Office of Healthy Schools. “I will support efforts in the 2007 legislative session to require all K-8th grade students to participate in 30 minutes of physical activity every day.”

In addition, the Governor said, he will endorse legislation requiring that K-8 students complete 45 minutes a week of health education. “We need to emphasize the value of learning to live healthy and how adopting good nutrition and exercise habits early in life can contribute to a longer and higher quality of life.”

Governor Barbour called for a requirement that K-8 grade students complete an annual Body Mass Index assessment. He said the legislation would give individual schools the freedom to customize programs of their own.

The Governor also reiterated his proposal to expand the School Nurse Program. Currently, more than 60 school nurses who implement tobacco prevention programs serve more than 50 school districts, and the Governor proposed doubling that number and expanding their mission to other health-related issues, education and outreach. He proposed to pay for the expanded program with funds from the Health Care Expendable Fund.

“We instinctively know the importance of promoting healthier lifestyles – lower costs, more job creation, mental clarity and a longer and better quality of life,” Governor Barbour said. “These proposals are another step toward turning that instinct into action by starting earlier with a sustained program of physical activity in our classrooms.”

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